

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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WEBINAR:

GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP
FOR
YOUNG INVESTIGATORS

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WEDNESDAY

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PROCEEDINGS

Slide One:

Dr. ALBRO: Good afternoon, everyone. I hope everyone is well. I'm Liz Albro and I'm going to be your presenter today. So the purpose of this particular webinar is to talk about preparing a successful grant application for the Institute of Education Sciences, and the focus here is really on young investigators or investigators who are new to the process of applying for federal grants. So, if there's anyone on the phone who has been on our webinars where we do a general overview, this will seem very similar, but I will focus specifically on parts of the application where young investigators need to pay particular attention.

Slide Two:

How do we get started? I think most of you will recognize this, but certainly the first thing to recognize is that competing or completing a successful grant application is a process and it starts before you put together your initial proposal or your initial application. And so I'm going to talk a lot about the process that we encourage our applicants to follow in terms of being in touch with program staff, in terms of making sure that you understand well the requirements of the Request for Applications (RFA) and to let you know that this should be an ongoing conversation that you have with the program staff here at the Institute.

The other piece of this and again I'm sure that most of you are aware of this is that preparing a grant application is part of a larger process that any researcher will be in the midst of, so preparing a grant application is part of a larger program of research that you are trying to develop, and it's only one piece of all the work that you'll need to do in order to successfully complete your proposal.

I think one of the other important characteristics to remember is that even before you put in an application for a grant, there are things that you need to be doing as a young or junior investigator to prepare yourself for taking on a leadership role in a federal grant. So I've put here three things you need to be considering as you're beginning to develop this process.

Slide Three:

The first is that as you progress through your training you need to be focusing on acquiring experience, taking responsibility for components of the research project. So when you're thinking about your own curriculum vitae and you're thinking about how you can demonstrate to the review panel that you have appropriate experience, you certainly should think about the roles you've played in projects across your lifespan as a researcher.

Another important thing to recognize is that as you move through the grant-getting process, it's important to start small. So one of the things you will need to demonstrate in your CV and in your report of the work that you have done is that you're demonstrating increasing responsibility as you move through your research career. So, begin smaller, with smaller projects -- say, things that are internal grants, say maybe you can get funding through your department or through your university or maybe a local grant to start some research. Demonstrate your ability to see that project all the way

through and see it to completion, present the findings from that, and then hopefully if it's of sufficient quality move it on to publication.

The other way to do this is to try to take advantage of opportunities that you have where you can take – lesser is perhaps the wrong word – but different roles on external proposals outside of being the principal investigator: so, being the co-principal investigator or a project manager or a project director.

And as I've already alluded to and for those of you on the phone who are assistant professors, know that it's critical for you to demonstrate productivity. So it's not enough to simply get these smaller grants, but you need to show through your own work -- through presentations and publications -- that you can see a project through to completion and disseminate it out to the general public.

Slide Four:

Having set that as the groundwork, here are some things that you all need to do as you begin. So these are in many ways what I think are critical features of a successful application. So the first thing is to take the time to read the Request for Applications (RFA) carefully. For those of you on the phone who have already looked at the full Request for Applications, you'll know that it's I think an 84-page document. So it's not small -- at least for the National Center for Education Research. The Special Ed. RFA is a little bit smaller, but it's still long. But the first thing you really need to do is read that RFA very carefully. Make sure you understand the distinction, for example, between topics and goals and how that then relates to the research project you'd like to carry out.

Another critical component of a good application is to build a good team. And I will talk some more about what those characteristics might look like, depending upon the kind of project you are proposing to put forward.

Another critical dimension, I think, to successful applications is to talk to your program officer. There are named program officers for each of the topic areas across both the National Center for Ed. Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), and it is our role here, at IES, to provide you support as you are preparing your application. So be in touch with the program officer who is responsible for the topics that you're intending to submit to.

And of course, one of the other things we want you to do is write a good proposal, a good application. And I think it's not only, from my point of view, clearly the scientific integrity of the proposal that is key, but it's also important that you attend to the writing of the proposal. So pay attention to the clarity, to the organization, to the physical organization of the text, so that it is something that is easily readable and is clear and coherent.

Slides Five and Six:

So, let me start with the first recommendation here. First, read the request for applications carefully. To do that, you need to be able to find the RFA. Again, for those of you who have not found the RFAs, those are located on our website. If you go to <http://ies.ed.gov/funding>, you will be able to pull down the appropriate Request for Applications. So we have our education research RFA and we have our special education research RFA, and both of those are available at that site.

For those of you who are not sure whether you are going to be able to put an application together for the October 2 deadline but are interested in considering putting in applications for future deadlines, you should certainly sign up for the IES Newsflash, which is our sort of news service where you'll get notifications from the Institute as to when new RFAs are posted. So, if you are not already signed up for that, I would encourage you to do so.

Slide Seven:

Just for those of you who prefer a visual presentation of this information, here is the main page, and the two areas circled in red are where you can find the funding opportunities information and where you can find the Newsflash information.

Slide Eight:

The second step for the Request for Applications (well, not the second step, but there is a two-step process): first you need to download the RFA, which has all the information about what content needs to go into the proposal in terms of thinking of questions of design and topic. But in order to actually submit your application, you need to download the application package at www.grants.gov. The application package for the October 2 deadline for the education research grants is now available. So if you go there, you should be able to find those packages.

Slide Nine:

How do you find them? You want to make sure you know the CFDA number of the particular RFA to which you are responding. So, when you go to grants.gov, if you are intending to submit to an Education Research Grant topic, you need to select the 84.305A package. If you are intending to submit for the Special Education Research Grant Program package, you need to select the 84.324A package.

Once you've made the decision about whether you're going to be in education or special education -- I guess I should comment on what's the distinction. You'll see that there is a high degree of overlap in terms of the types of topics that we support across the special education and typically developing education program. The main distinction, however, is that if your focus of research is really on special education students only, or students who are at risk for becoming identified as in need of special education services, you should apply underneath the special education RFA.

For any reason you are not clear whether your program fits under the special ed. or the education research RFA, you should be in touch with both program officers, and we will find a way to talk with you, either together or separately to try to help you make an appropriate choice.

Slide Ten:

So what are the topics?

Slide Eleven:

The topic areas that are discussed in our standing research programs are really the content of your proposed research. Within the National Center for Education Research, these are some of our topics. We accept proposals looking at reading and writing instruction for

students between kindergarten and 12th grade. We look at projects addressing mathematics and science education, again for K through 12 students.

We have a topic called Cognition and Student Learning, which is really intended for individuals coming to questions of learning from a cognitive science background, but the goal here is to really test what we know about learning that has emerged from cognitive science and see the degree to which those principles apply in the context of classroom or K-12 learning.

We have a topic on social and behavioral context for academic learning. We have programs focused on teacher quality, education leadership, education policy, finance, and systems. And again, I'm not going to go into great detail about any of these. You all can read the RFA for greater detail or talk with your program staff.

Slide Twelve:

We have a program in early childhood. So this is for 4- and 5-year-olds, typically within the National Center for Education Research. Anyone interested in working with children in the 0 to 3 age range would need to look at programs within the National Center for Special Education. We also have programs in middle and high school reform, and programs focusing specifically on struggling adolescent and adult readers and writers. We have a program looking at ways to improve the experience of postsecondary education for at-risk learners. And we have a program focused on education technology.

Slide Thirteen:

For the Special Education Center, we have an early intervention and early childhood special education topic. We have a topic focused on reading, writing, and language development -- again, a topic focused on mathematics and science education, but here the target population would be students who qualify or who are at risk for qualifying for special education services. We also have a program focused on social and behavioral outcomes to support learning.

The Special Education Center has an interest in supporting research looking at transition outcomes for special education secondary students. Many special education students are not going to be moving into postsecondary education, and so one of the questions is, How do we best support these students as they are moving out of the secondary support system?

Slide Fourteen:

The Special Education Center has a new topic this year that we expect will be continuing for the next several years, where we are encouraging folks to look again at cognitive science and bring that to bear on questions about learning within the context of special education. We have a program in teacher quality, a program in related services.

We also have a systemic-level topic. So, for individuals who are interested in understanding better how the special education services sector within the K-12 education system could be organized, you might consider coming in under that topic. And finally, we have a topic focused on autism spectrum disorders.

So, we think that for many of the topics that individuals might be interested in, there is a home for you within either the NCER or NCSER research programs.

I have a couple of questions here. "Does the RFA support research in the teaching of a foreign language?" Generally not. The real focus of our Request for Applications is really focused on looking at supporting the reading and writing outcomes in the language of instruction, which, in the United States, is English, and in mathematics and science education. So we do not have a specific location for that and I have not seen applications come in for the teaching of a foreign language. I don't think that's necessarily a good fit for us.

I have another question here, but I'm going to hold until we get to the right section.

So, once you figure out what's the right topic for your project, then you need to make a decision about identifying the appropriate goal.

I think in many ways making a choice about topic may be more straightforward for many of you because when we think about our research, we tend to think about it in a topical way -- in a topical fashion.

Slide Fifteen:

But one of the things that the Institute has done is we've created this goal structure where what we are encouraging researchers to do is to really think long and hard about where they are on their research trajectory and which Goal is appropriate for the type of research question they're planning to task.

So we've identified five different Goals and I'm going to give a brief description of each of them.

Slide Sixteen:

Our Goal One -- the focus of that is to identify programs, practices, or malleable factors associated with better student outcomes. So this is a Goal One project. And this extends across all of our topics, I think. There may be one topic where there's not an Identification Goal, but in general, it's available across all of the topics.

Our Goal Two is to develop new education interventions, so the focus here is really on spending your research time developing an education intervention that really targets an area of need and that doesn't currently exist.

Our Goal Three is to evaluate the efficacy of interventions. The intent of this particular goal is to take a fully developed intervention and test it in the field using an experimental or quasi-experimental design to get some preliminary or other information about the "what works" question. So, does the intervention, in fact, cause the improvement in student achievement that you expect that it would?

Our Goal Four is our Scale-up Goal and here the purpose of this Goal is to support research that evaluates the impact of interventions when implemented at scale.

And then our Goal Five is to develop and/or validate measurement tools. So again, if we know that measurement is a critical issue across many of these different topic areas and that there are not sufficient numbers of reliable and adequate tools, then we support research to develop and validate those tools.

Slide Seventeen:

One thing to keep in mind for those of you on the phone who are junior investigators is to think about the scope of the project that you're proposing. Often, you want to think about

proposing a smaller project that is clear that you can complete given your prior history, your prior experience, and what you've done in terms of managing research grants. Although I'm going to talk about all five of the Goals here, I want you to keep in mind that smaller is often better for someone who is just beginning this process of getting larger research grants. So, I'm just going to say that and I will emphasize each as I go through.

I have a question here that I'm going to go ahead and just talk a little bit about, which says, "Is there a way that we can highlight these pre-application experiences on our applications?" So, some of the things in terms of your roles on prior projects -- I think absolutely, there are ways you can do that. And I will try to highlight those as we go through.

Just a couple of things. One is you really want to spend time thinking about your biographical sketches and thinking about the information you include there, where it makes it very clear what your role and experiences have been in prior projects.

I often also recommend that junior investigators spend a little bit more time in the personnel section of the actual research narrative itself in elaborating your prior history and experience on projects. And clearly, if you have been able to present findings from research or if you've published findings from prior research that's relevant to the project you're proposing, you should cite the work that you've done in, say, the significance section or the preliminary section, the pilot data section, or whatever area of the literature review would make sense to demonstrate your ability to begin and carry a project through to the end.

We have another question: "Does IES have guidelines for acceptable interventions?" I'm not entirely sure what the focus of that question is, to be honest, but we don't have any guidelines. I mean the intent here is you need to describe why you have selected the intervention, what theoretical support exists in the literature for that intervention, as well as any empirical support that's already there.

I'll talk more about those characteristics as I go through each of the Goals, and if you still have a question at the end please write it back in and I'll address it again.

I have one topic up here that I actually want to address before I move forward, which says, "Does the social behavioral outcomes topic deal with things like behavior intervention plans?" I think absolutely, particularly for the special education topics focused on social and behavioral outcomes, and I would encourage you to talk to the program officer who's named for that topic about that particular issue.

Slide Eighteen:

All right, so what are the goals?

The Identification and/or Exploration goal has really as its intent to support researchers to identify or explore factors such as malleable child abilities or skills, malleable practices -- programs that are associated with better student learning and achievement outcomes.

So you may have some ideas about characteristics of a classroom that you think are going to be important or characteristics of instruction that are going to be important that you're not sure what the strength of that relationship is. Maybe it's just a hunch and you haven't collected systematic data on that. This Goal is an opportunity for you to begin to look at those questions more systematically.

So, we've put forth in the current RFA three different ways that you can propose to identify and explore these malleable factors. One is through secondary data analyses or secondary analyses of longitudinal datasets. These datasets can be your own datasets that you've collected. These could be state or district-level datasets that include student outcome data but also might include information about teacher, classroom, school characteristics that you could look to see if there are relationships between different forms of, say, school organizations or school characteristics and student outcomes. These can also be longitudinal datasets that exist within -- that are housed say through the National Center for Education Statistics or through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, where there's quite a bit of information that's available and it is available for the public to use.

In addition, we invite applications from those who are interested in identifying and exploring these malleable factors, to conduct original data collection and conduct what we're calling here small descriptive studies. But again, maybe you have several classrooms in mind and you're really interested in, say, a way that reading instruction occurs in 9th grade English classes -- just making something up here.

So you have this idea, and you know that in some of these classrooms that you have been in, the students seem to be highly engaged, the teachers seem to enjoy what they are doing, and student outcomes seem to be better than other comparable 9th grade English classrooms focused on reading instruction.

What you could propose to do is to collect some systematic data that would allow you to compare instructional practices -- maybe homework activities, learning activities - - between the two different types of classrooms, to see if your hunch is actually borne out in the data. The idea would then be that you would have identified things that could potentially become part of an intervention in a future study.

And finally, we have included the use of meta-analyses, where you can look at previously existing studies and do a systematic meta-analysis to see again if there appear to be factors, things that can be changed within the context of the school system, that support or seem to support student achievement.

So the meta-analyses that one could propose under a goal one are not meant to answer causal questions about what works, but rather are meant to identify some of these factors that could then be explored in future studies.

And I have a question here. "In this respect, would a Goal One project be a good place to start for young investigators?" And the answer is yes, you took the words right out of my mouth, so that is in fact, when I talk with junior investigators who are just learning about IES, who are interested in looking at education research questions, I actually recommend that they look at the Goal One, the Goal One studies. I think it is important, from two perspectives. One is that not only are these (studies) a smaller program, so if I go to the next page, you'll see the dollar amounts that are associated with the Identification goal are somewhat smaller, but these are also studies that you can complete relatively quickly. And for those of you, again, who are on the tenure clock, if you're a junior-level assistant professor, one of the other things that you need to be thinking about is how can I get a grant funded, collect the data, and get some publications out of it in a relatively quick time period? Clearly, doing a secondary data analysis or a meta-analysis would allow you to go through that process much more quickly than collecting original data, new original data.

Slide Nineteen:

I have another question, which says, "NIH allows individuals to identify themselves as new investigators and gives them a few points towards their application. Does IES have a similar system?" And the answer to that is no, our new investigators are just considered investigators like everyone else. I will say, however, that we have been successful at supporting a respectable number of junior investigators through this program. So it has not been something that we have done, at least not to date.

So other quick requirements here for the Identification Goal. Just so you know, I'm going to talk about monetary ranges, and I want you to take home the understanding that these are really ranges; it's not like you have to ask for \$100,000 a year or you can't ask for more than \$350,000 a year. These are just ballpark figures and what's really critical is that you ask for the amount of money that makes sense, given the work that you're proposing to do.

And another thing I want to encourage junior investigators to do is to make sure that you work closely with your grants and contracts office, which can really help you think about the components of a budget that you may not have thought about to date, about what you should include.

I guess the other thing to know is that if you're only proposing to do a secondary data analysis, then you can only request 2 years of funding. If, however, you are collecting some primary data or doing some observational work or descriptive work, you can request up to 4 years worth of funding.

I have here, "Can you talk about the acceptance rate of different Goals?" You know, I actually don't have those figures off the top of my head, but our general acceptance rate across all of the topics and goals and competitions, anywhere from 10 to 13 percent is our general acceptance rate. So it is competitive and I'm just trying to think here if I've seen anything that suggests that the acceptance rate is different across different Goals. And I actually don't think so. I think the general rate is about 10, 12 percent.

I have a question here that says, "Can I access previous Goal One studies anywhere to get a sense of the Goal?" You can certainly look at our abstracts online. Now I want to put out two cautions. One is that our Goal One identification studies are in many ways still a work in progress, so we've only had this goal for I think this is just the second year that we've competed this across many topics. So, I wouldn't want you to take the current Goal Ones that exist on the website as definitive and/or prescriptive. For example, the meta-analysis is something that we've only just included for this particular Request for Applications and so no one would have been able to propose it before. So, if you don't see any meta-analyses in our abstracts, that's because there has not been an opportunity for folks to do that to date.

The other part I wanted to say is that we do have abstracts for our funded projects that are available on the website under the programs and projects page, but we are still in the process of getting the abstracts for our brand new awards up on the website. So you may find that you don't have all the information that you'd like, but they will be coming up. It will be there.

I have another question here, which I am going to put out and I'm going to try to clarify it as I move forward here. It says, "Can you clarify the nature of collecting descriptive data and conducting small experimental pilot studies as a Goal One proposal

for the NCSE RFA--the special ed. RFA?" First I want to say about collecting descriptive data under Goal One: the intent here is not to try to do any manipulations -- to try to figure out what works better than something else in a definitive, causal way. The real purpose here is to really get some rich information about what current instructional practice looks like and to see if we can get some information about what these factors might be.

Generally, the sort of small-scale manipulations that I would see in the experimental pilot data would be something I would be more likely to see in a Goal Two Development study, which I'm going to talk a little bit more about now. All right?

Slide Twenty:

So the next Goal, our Goal Two: this is our Development Goal, and historically if you look over time you'll see that this is the Goal where we have funded the most projects. It's also the Goal where the requirements have shifted from competition to competition. So, this is another sort of "buyer beware" statement. If you go and look at the descriptions of the Development Goal projects that are on our website, you will notice that the nature of the development projects may look different across the different fiscal years that have been competed and where grants have been made.

And I just want you to be aware of the fact that the Development Goal requirements have changed from year to year and so it's difficult to use those abstracts as good guidelines for developing new proposals for the fiscal (FY) 2009 competition. So I want to encourage you all to read carefully the RFA and look at the requirements and expectations for development.

So the intent here under the Development Goal is to develop new interventions or to refine or make modifications to interventions that are currently used but perhaps are not operating in the way you hoped they would, right, they're not working as intended. Or maybe you wanted to develop new units for an intervention or curriculums that you have three or four units that already exist and you need another four units in order to make it a full-year curriculum. All of those are possibilities under Development.

The other thing to know about my use of the word "interventions": you should understand that (term) very broadly. So an intervention can include something as specific as a particular instructional practice or set of instructional practices that a teacher might use when delivering a lecture, all the way up through a full curriculum, a full year curriculum that includes student materials and perhaps teacher materials as well. Or it could be an intervention focused specifically on a teacher professional development training where you're developing the materials and you're thinking about how best to provide teachers with that professional development.

The main intent of the Development goal is that by the end of the 3-year project period you will have an intervention that is fully developed. And by fully developed we mean one that has demonstrated feasibility and usability so a teacher can use it and a kid can use it and they can implement it in the way in which it was intended. And we also have put in the possibility of collecting pilot data on the promise of the intervention to achieve intended outcomes. So here you can simply collect pre/post data to see if, in fact, students' academic achievement or behavioral outcomes are moving in the direction that you hoped they would be moving.

Slide Twenty-one:

The general award amounts for the Development Goal are approximately \$150,000 to \$500,000 per year. That's total cost, direct plus indirect. And you can request funds for anywhere from 1 to 3 years and the number of years you ask for really depends upon the amount of prior work completed and how much remains to be done.

So I have a question here about Development Goals -- or this may be across everything. "Is there a cap on how much of the budget goes to data collection versus the program versus investigators?"

You know, we actually don't have any specified limits in terms of how the budget breaks out. And I think, in part, because it really does vary quite tremendously across the goals and across the nature of the intervention. So you may find, for example, if you're proposing to do, say, an efficacy or a scale-up evaluation, that a much larger proportion of your budget is going to go to paying for the intervention that you're going to be implementing.

On the other hand, for a Goal One Identification study, you may find that the vast majority of that budget is actually personnel time, investigator time.

Here is another question about Goal Two. It says, "We are considering submitting a Goal Two proposal in collaboration with another university and the investigators at the other university have substantial experience with large research grants. Is it reasonable for us to be the primary investigator as junior faculty members, or will that be a significant disadvantage in the evaluation of our grant?"

I think it really depends upon what you're proposing -- what you're planning to do. One of the things that reviewers are going to be evaluating is the degree to which you as the principal investigators bring the skills that are required for the project you're proposing. So, if you're proposing a relatively small project, that makes sense, given your prior experience, and you're bringing on as co-principal investigators individuals from a larger research university who are serving maybe in the capacity of an advisory board or consultants. Then I think that that is certainly fine to do.

Reviewers are really looking at what you propose to do and the context of your application and the degree to which your skills and abilities map onto what you've proposed to do. I hope that answered that question.

"I have a deadline question here. Are there only two applications each year, the summer and fall dates?" The answer is yes.

We're back to, "How many total studies are funded each year across the Goals?" We don't have a limit in terms of the number of awards that we can make, at least not so far, so we've been in a position that we have been able to support all of the applications that have come through that our reviewers have considered to be of outstanding or excellent quality. The number of studies that we've been funding or the number of projects that we've been funding each year has been increasing, and I believe in this year across both of our competitions we funded 70 within the National Center for Education Research and for the National Center for Special Education Research somewhere between 20 and 30.

So if you look on our website, we have a project selector that allows you to search funded grants and you can actually look by fiscal year and by Goal if you're interested to know how many were funded each year. But the number has been increasing over the past several years.

All right, I'm going to move on to these Goals and then I know people have more questions, so I will answer those as we continue through.

Slide Twenty-two:

So our Goal Three is our Efficacy and Replication Goal. Now this is a project that a junior investigator should not immediately discount because it really depends upon the prior experience that you would bring to this particular project. Here the intent is that you have a fully developed intervention. This does not have to be an intervention that you yourself have developed. It can be an intervention that's already out there that the schools are using. But it's an intervention for which there is not a tremendous amount of evidence as to the causal effects of this curriculum on student outcomes.

And I just want to put a caveat on here. I am primarily focusing on curriculum and student outcomes, in part, because of my own research background, but I want you all to realize that you can extend this to questions concerning policy and systems as well as curriculum, as well as questions concerning teachers and teacher professional development.

So, for an efficacy study you are testing the degree to which an intervention has a net positive impact on the outcomes of interest relative to the program or practice to which it is being compared. In general, studies that we support under efficacy, under Goal Three, are about experimental design, where teachers in classrooms -- and sometimes schools -- are randomly assigned to receive the intervention, the treatment, and other schools and classrooms and teachers typically are continuing to do normal practice.

We will also consider quasi-experimental designs and there is language in the RFA that describes what you will need to do in terms of preparing your application to let the reviewers know that you've considered the option of doing an experimental design and have decided not to go forward with that.

But these don't have to be huge projects. I guess the reason that perhaps some junior investigators think this is not appropriate for them is they think these need to be projects at the level of scale-up. They are not intended to be that large, so these can be studies that occur in 10 to 20 classrooms, depending upon what the particular content of the intervention is that you are testing.

So the amount of funding that's available is \$250,000 to \$750,000 per year. Again, this is a general range. It's not a firm and fixed range. So you need to justify in your budget justification why you're asking for the amount of funding that you're asking for, whether it be lower or higher. And you need to request up to 4 years' worth of funding. I know you don't need to -- that came out wrong. You can request up to 4 years' worth of funding. Clearly, if you want to look, do a single efficacy trial of an intervention that is only, maybe, a 6-month intervention; you don't need to ask for 4 years' worth of funding. You can put in a proposal for a 2-year project where you tested the intervention once or twice.

Slide Twenty-three:

All right, now I will say this here. For junior investigators, the Scale-up evaluation Goal is probably not going to be the best place to start. These are the largest grants that we support and the goal here is to test the impact of interventions implemented at scale. I

think one of the things that reviewers are looking for here is that the project director and principal investigators on these projects have experience leading efficacy-like trials or efficacy trials out in the field. And again, depending upon your experience, it is less likely that someone who is just starting out would have had sufficient time as a researcher to complete a long history of doing these types of efficacy projects.

The other critical dimension to keep in mind for scale-up is that what you're really focusing on here is you're moving a little bit away from having a developer be in charge of the implementation process. The idea here is that the practitioner who is the intended deliverer of the intervention is delivering the intervention. So it should be typical classroom teachers, not the graduate student RAs, delivering the intervention. The idea here really is to test what happens, what are the causal effects of this particular curriculum in an intervention when delivered by teachers under typical conditions.

Again, studies using randomized assignment to treatment and comparison conditions are strongly preferred. And again, the range is \$500,000 to \$1.2 million per year total cost, and you can request funding for up to 5 years.

Slide Twenty-four:

And our final Goal but by no means our least goal here is our Measurement Goal. The intent of this Goal is to support the development and testing of assessments or other measurement tools. This goal has a lot of possibility and I actually think that, we see fewer applications than I would like to see under the Measurement Goal. I think that this is an area where we would really like to see growth across both of the centers.

For those of you who are interested in developing observation tools to use in classrooms, if you're interested in developing new comprehension measures in the context of reading, if you're interested in developing measures of science content, if you're interested in developing measures of the knowledge that education leaders need to have, these are all areas where the numbers of valid and reliable assessment or measurement tools is considerably smaller than what we would like to see. So this is a great goal and again, the monetary amounts are there. It's \$150,000 to \$400,000 per year. You can request funding for up to 4 years. And I guess the one thing to note under the Measurement Goal is that this goal is not intended to support large-scale validation of the data. It's really meant to develop -- do item development, do some tryouts of the measurement tool and then to get some of the first-level reliability and validity data that you need to have before you would move to a large-scale validation.

"Would efficacy studies be delivered by researchers or practitioners?" I'm actually glad you raised that question because I wasn't clear. Efficacy studies can be delivered by either, I think. I mean it really just depends upon the nature of the intervention. Often, what will happen is that you can have an efficacy and replication study where you want to test out the intervention in the best of all possible circumstances. And sometimes that means that you want the researcher or a very highly trained teacher who has worked with you to develop the intervention to be the individual delivering it.

This is something that I would encourage you to talk with your program officer about, to think about how it makes sense given the particular nature of the study that you're proposing. Clearly, a practitioner or a teacher can also deliver it, but often what you'll see is that one of the things that could be tested for efficacy, for example, is whether the amount of professional development given to teachers has an influence on

the causal outcomes or the strength of the student achievement outcomes that you would see.

Slide Twenty-five:

"For a Goal Two study, is it more appropriate for the lead developer to be the PI on the project or the lead researcher to be the PI?" You know, that's actually a really interesting question and I don't know that I have a single answer to that question. I think, in part, it's going to depend on what the background is of the developer. And I think what I mean by this is that -- and I really didn't focus on this here -- but throughout the goal two language, there is this expectation that you will be collecting feasibility and usability data and that there will be this continual iterative feedback loop that is going on throughout the development project and that there will be data that will be collected and analyzed and then used to refine the development of the curriculum materials.

And depending upon the characteristics of the developer, that person may or may not be the best person to come in as PI. But on the other hand, that person may be very well qualified to do that. So again, please do talk to your program officer to help you through that.

I have a question here that says, "Do you need pilot data on the assessment you are developing in order to submit for the Measurement Goal?" No, there's no requirement that you have pilot data. You certainly should talk about what kinds of pilot data you're planning to collect and use and you want to draw on whatever other work is out there that would support the need for the tool that you're developing and that would support the strategies that you're deciding to take in terms of developing a new tool.

"Is an IES grant an appropriate place to submit a proposal on parent education?" Generally, no. The sort of language of our priorities is really focused on things that are within the control of the K-12 education system and generally parents aren't required to go to school, as it were, and parent education is not under the purview of the K-12 system.

The only exception that I can think of would be under the special education RFA. There may be places where the role of the parent and helping to improve parent support of their at-risk or identified student could be part of the project. There may be room for it, but it should not be -- at least in the National Center for Education Research grants -- it will not be the primary focus of a project. So again, if you have a particular topic area you're interested in, do talk with your program officer.

I have a question here that says, "Are any Goals other than Goal One appropriate for analyzing longitudinal data?" My immediate instinct is to answer no. I don't know if there are particular additional details that you're thinking of. That Goal One is the typical place where we would see secondary data analysis of longitudinal data.

We have a question here from a junior faculty member: "I'm a junior faculty member who is not on a tenured track. Would it make sense to work with a tenured track faculty for credibility?" Potentially, right, depending upon your situation. Again, I don't know the context, but my immediate question -- and a question I think reviewers would ask -- is, To what degree are you in a position at your university where the university or college would continue to support you if indeed you were to get funded? So, tenure track may not be a critical component here, but it may be to the degree to which you can

explain to the reviewers that you're not going to be asked to move in the middle of your grant.

I think the other point of clarification that's really important here is that that grants from IES are not awarded to individuals. Grants are awarded to the university or to the college or to the organization and so it is at their discretion as to whether a grant would then follow a PI if the PI would move. So, it's really about the stability of your position and where you would be that I think is the critical dimension here.

"For the Development Goal, how much prior development is too much if there is such a thing?" Again, this is going to be a case-by-case situation. But I think one of the critical dimensions -- and I know I talked about this on the webinar on Monday -- is that it's very important that you make it clear what has already been developed and what remains to be developed. If you have a project or an intervention that's already been well developed and you're thinking about making minor tweaks, you will need to explain to the reviewers why it's important for you to receive additional funding to do this, why you think you need to make these additional tweaks. If there's something particular about the intervention that's not working well, what is it?

I have up here a question: "Is there some limit of proposals that can be submitted by one institution within or across schools?" The answer is no, not from our perspective.

I have a question here and then I'm going to move on and continue going through the slides after this. "Is the difference between Goal Two and Goal Five that Goal Two is based on intervention and Five is based on assessment? What are the other major differences between these two Goals?"

It really has to do with what the outcome is. So for Goal Two the focus is on developing interventions. This is developing, say, curriculum materials or other forms of materials that will be used to deliver instruction to the students, whereas the focus of a Goal Five is really on developing a measurement tool, or developing some sort of a test or an observation instrument that would be used to measure outcomes of interventions, as opposed to the actual intervention itself.

All right, I think maybe my slide that I put up here -- which Goal and topic are right for you -- sort of generated some of these questions that we heard here. But clearly you all are thinking long and hard about what's the right Goal and topic for the project that you're considering proposing.

Some things to think about: you should choose the topic and Goal that demonstrate your expertise and skills. So, one of the things that you may notice or you may want to know is, should I come in under Reading and Writing, should I come in under Interventions for Struggling Adolescent and Adult Readers and Writers? And while some of that is constrained by the characteristics of the population you want to work with, some of it may also be driven by what your own background and expertise are. So think about what you bring to the project as well as what the RFA is asking.

Again, you need to think about which Goal is appropriate for the questions you really want to answer. I think another important thing to remember is that you're probably going to have a whole lot of questions that you want to answer, and one of the reasons that we have put the Goal structure in place is to encourage researchers to put together applications and proposals that only focus on one or a small group of those questions, so as to narrow the focus of the application, because reviewers need to know what it is you plan to do, and if you plan to do everything from identify a malleable

factor, develop an intervention, and complete an efficacy study, there is no way you can adequately describe the work that you would need to do in order to do all of that in a single application, not to mention that you couldn't do it in 3 years.

I have a question that says, "Do you only recommend one topic and one Goal?" It's not a recommendation; it's a requirement. You must select one topic and one Goal for each application. So when you prepare an application, you prepare an application that speaks to developing, or to doing something, to doing one goal and one topic. You could put in multiple applications if you were interested in something for a different topic and a different Goal.

I have a question here about age, about the K-12 setting: "What about early childhood that falls outside of the K-12 range?" If you're interested in early childhood projects, we do have coverage for that. So, under the Early Childhood Programs and Practices, you could certainly apply under that. The Cognition and Student Learning topic also permits applications looking at prekindergarten students. Within the National Center for Special Education Research, you have areas where you can submit.

On the slide here, I put the link to where you can do our grant selector, where you can look at the abstracts that are of interest to you. So you guys can look there too.

"On the current website, it seems that you can only access the title of the awarded grant. How do you see the abstract?" If you click on the title, you should be able to go directly to the abstract. I do want to remind you that for some of the newest awards, you're not going to see abstracts yet because we're still in the process of getting those up, so those awards were just recently made.

So if you click on a 2007 or 2006 award, on that title it should bring you to that abstract.

Slide Twenty-six:

All right, I'm going to keep going. I have a couple of other questions, but I will get to those in just a few minutes. Here is the question we had earlier: "What if my program is 'between' Goals or topics." Or maybe the question I received earlier was that you want to do multiple Goals and topics.

Again, for each application, you need to pick one Goal and you need to pick one topic. So, read the RFA and break the project down into smaller pieces. Don't just go for the largest amount of money. I think this is actually very important for junior investigators because part of what you're going to need to be demonstrating is your capacity to manage a project. And unless you have experience -- as, say, the project director or the manager for a series of large grant projects coming into this, if you ask for the top amount that you can ask for in a grant, reviewers will ask: why?

So the goal here is to create an application which is well crafted -- that it's a well-crafted project. You have a clear set of research questions, you have a design that maps onto those questions, you have strong analytic methods laid out, and it can all happen in the time period that you have proposed. So, aim for a well-crafted project that will deliver what it promises.

Slide Twenty-seven:

In case you all haven't heard this already in what I have been saying so far, your real challenge here is to convince the reviewers that you have the skills and experience to

implement well what you have proposed. I'm looking at my slides and I'm a little worried about my ability to get through them all, so I'm going to sort of go through several of these here.

Slide Twenty-eight:

So how do you do that? So how do you address this challenge -- how do you convince the reviewers that it is your project that they should recommend for funding? Building a good team is the first thing you should really be doing, and I know that I have already received questions where folks have been thinking and asking about that.

Slide Twenty-nine:

How do you build a team? First, think about the type of expertise that is needed to carry out the project. And again, the type of expertise is going to vary tremendously across the different projects, depending upon the Goal that you are proposing. So if you're proposing a Goal Two, where you're going to develop a curriculum, you want to make sure that you've got folks on your team who have experience developing materials for curriculum.

If you're going to be putting in a Goal Five, a Measurement proposal, you probably want to make sure you have a psychometrician on board, right? If you're not the psychometrician, you want to make sure that you have someone there who brings those skills. For any of the Identification or the Efficacy or Scale-up projects, you are probably going to want to have on board a statistician or a methodologist who can provide you with additional advice and consultation for the work going forward.

You want to consider your Goals and you want to consider your own training and experience. You may be the person who brings these skills to the table. So, think about the other sorts of skills that you need to have on hand in order to bring this project through to completion.

And something that you can really do when you talk to your program officers is talk through each of these sorts of requirements.

Slide Thirty:

Other important things when you're building your team: demonstrate your productivity. I talked about the personnel section that's part of the research narrative. I've talked about your sort of lit review. One of the things you want to do there is show how your experience is going to enable the success of this particular project.

I think it is generally a good idea to include a senior researcher. If you're a junior investigator, you want to include a senior researcher on your project with a strong grant record. Now what role that individual plays will vary, and so this could be someone who is a consultant, who comes in for 10 days a year to advise you. You could have an advisory board of four or five or six senior researchers who are advising you in your process, or the senior researcher could be involved at the level of the co-PI. All of these are possible strategies and are all strategies that junior investigators have used successfully in the past.

The critical component for a senior researcher, as well as for anyone else on your team, is that one of the things you need to be really sensitive to is making sure that the team members commit sufficient time to implement the proposed research. So it doesn't

stand to your benefit to include a senior researcher as a co-PI when that senior investigator has only 1 percent effort or time to commit to the project. If that is the only time they have available, then they probably should be included in a consultant role.

I have a question here that says, "Is there an advantage to having team members serve as co-PIs rather than as consultants?" Again, I really think this varies. It depends upon the expertise that you, yourself bring. Having multiple co-PIs can become logistically complex, right, in terms of roles and responsibilities. But as you're moving into larger projects, you may very well need a co-PI. So, for example, in an efficacy study, I'm just thinking off the top of my head here, most of the efficacy studies that I have supported do have co-PIs. But many of the identification projects only have one named co-PI, and then would have consultants or advisors on board. Development projects are a little bit more variable.

I have another question here that I actually think I want to answer right now: "Would you recommend that a young investigator consider long-term grant goals, (i.e., submitting first Goal One, submit application to develop an education intervention from the outcomes of Goal One, then seek funding to evaluate the intervention Goal Three)? Is this common to build on a line of inquiry/topic when submitting grants over time across Goals?"

Absolutely. That's actually a very nice and succinct way to put a framework around this. I think that is a good progression that one could follow, and it does exactly what I talked about at the outset -- where you're demonstrating that you are able to manage successively larger grants and bring them to completion and get additional work funded. So I think you should certainly think about that as you're thinking over the long term, and that research takes time.

Slide Thirty-one: So, read the RFA again and talk to your program officer. If this is the only thing you take away from the webinar, you've learned something important.

Slide Thirty-two:

Again, we are here to help, so for those of you who don't know, all of us here on the staff are doctoral-level researchers and we can all provide you with as much or as little feedback as you want. The IES is organized in such a way that the review process is distinct from the program staff, so we have nothing to do with the review process. And this gives us the ability to provide feedback to researchers on their ideas, on the topic that they want to submit to on their proposed goal, and we can even look at abstracts and draft proposals, of course, if we get them sufficiently far in advance.

Slides Thirty-three and Thirty-four:

So one of the other critical things -- and something that I think actually all investigators sometimes struggle with -- is that you need to make sure you include everything. So one of the key components to writing a good proposal is to make sure that you complete all of the required components because you don't want to leave something out. If you leave something out you may find that a reviewer will give you a zero on that criterion and that's not going to be good.

So and I'm going to not spend a lot of time on this because I think there are quite probably additional questions, but when you're preparing your proposal or your

application, what are the things you need to include? The first is that you'll need to complete the Standard Form 424 Research and Related (R&R) forms that includes the R&R Total Federal and Non-Federal Budget form. All that information can be downloaded from grants.gov and if you are not already acquainted with your grants and sponsor projects office, you should talk with them early in the process. They can provide you with a lot of guidance and support through this, and because it is the institution that is submitting the application, they are the ones who will need to be pushing that final submit button. So they need to be making sure that the information that's going in the standard forms is correct and they can help you with that.

You'll need to complete a one-page project summary or abstract. And you'll need to complete the full contents of the application. So that's the hard part, right, that's the part that takes the most amount of time. So what are those? What is the content of an application?

Slide Thirty-five:

So, a full application will include a 25-page project narrative for any of our research grants. It will include a bibliography that includes the references cited, and there's no page limit to that. It will include short biographical sketches of key project personnel. So those biographical sketches are limited to four pages in length and for projects coming from junior investigators, you need to make sure that the biographical sketches that you include make it very clear what your experience is, what you bring.

One of the things I think is a good idea is to include a short paragraph at the top of your CV that explains the characteristics and skills that you bring to this particular project and to make sure that that information is also elaborated in the personnel section of the project narrative.

The application also includes a narrative budget justification in which you explain why you're asking for the amount of money you're asking for, how it's going to be spent, and how the proposed spending fits in with your project activity. And if you are going to have any subawards -- if, for example, a co-PI is at a different institution -- you would need to include a subaward budget and subaward budget justification for that other institution as well.

Slide Thirty-six:

Applications also include an appendix A and an optional appendix B. Appendix A is required and in appendix A you should include letters of agreement from schools, districts, owners of datasets you're going to be using, anything like that, and any tables or figures that can be used that supplement the 25-page research narrative.

If you are going to be resubmitting, if there's anyone on the phone who is in that category who plans to resubmit an application, the first three pages of appendix A should be used to provide a response to the reviewers, where you explain how you have revised the proposal in response to their comments.

Appendix B is meant primarily for goals -- well, all goals except Goal One, generally. But the idea here is that you can include sample curriculum materials, either ideas--so here's your mockup or your first prototype of the unit that you're going to be developing, or here are the scope and sequence of the curriculum that you're going to be

testing in efficacy, or examples of the items that you're going to be developing under an Assessment Goal.

Applications that are selected for funding are also asked to complete additional forms, but that happens after the application is submitted.

Slide Thirty-seven:

For preparing the proposal, when you think about creating a budget -- and this is one of the first things you have to do when you fill in the standard forms -- I recommend that you don't try to do this alone, that you get help. Again, if someone is relatively new at this process, you want to make sure that you create a budget that is adequate to supporting what you're intending to do. Another thing to remember is that while it's very easy for the federal government to request you to cut your budget, it's very difficult for us to add additional funds to your budget if you've neglected to put in, say, money to purchase assessments or outcome assessments in an efficacy study.

So talk with other people who are experienced in this. Again, your sponsor projects office is a great place, a great resource for you to go to in terms of creating a budget that makes sense, given the project that you're proposing.

Slide Thirty-eight:

In terms of preparing the project narrative -- (and I'm going to go through the slides and then I'll come back and answer the questions because I'm hoping I'll answer some of them as I go forward)-- what are the four sections or the four components of a project narrative?

Slide Thirty-nine:

Reviewers are asked to evaluate project narratives on four components. They evaluate the quality of: the significance section; of the proposed research plan; of the personnel; and of the resources available to carry out the research.

Slide Forty:

"What does the significance section look like?" Again, I'm going to refer you back to the RFA. We don't have time to go through each of the Goals, but what the significance section should include varies across each of the different Goals. So go back and look at the significance sections in light of the particular Goals. But in general, the significance section should include the theoretical foundation for what you're proposing to do or look at or examine, as well as any prior empirical support for the work you're proposing to do. This empirical work could involve, say, prior development work if you've already developed some units of the curriculum. Or it could be if you've done some small-scale pilot studies already and you want to come in for an efficacy study, that could be the empirical work you would propose. And again, this is something that is going to vary across topics and goals.

Slide Forty-one:

The research plan is in many ways the critical component of the application. The research plan is where you are telling the reviewers, and telling the program staff here at the Institute, what it is you're going to do with the money you've requested, right? So

what you're really doing here is you must provide enough information so that it's very clear what you're going to be doing, how long it's going to take, how you're going to code the data and use data analysis to answer the questions of interest, the questions that you've posed, again, which depend upon their research goal.

So make sure what you plan to do and how you plan to do it are clearly described. One of the most frequent comments that you'll see from reviewers and frequent questions that they have and why something is apt to come back a second time is that they'll say, "Well the theoretical foundation is really well done, the prior empirical work looks good, but I really don't have a good sense of what actually is going to happen?" And again, remember, what's being funded is not sort of your ability to talk about the theoretical foundations, but what's being supported are these actual research activities that you're planning to carry out. So make those as clear as you can.

Slide Forty-two:

Again, the personnel section is very critical for junior investigators. You need to include a description of the role of the key personnel in the personnel section of the narrative, so that's within the 25 pages. There should be a personnel section. Again for junior investigators, you may want to have a longer personnel section because you need to explain what your prior experience has been. Use your biographical sketches to further document your expertise and productivity. Those are only four pages in length, so you have to think long and hard about what are the critical components of your work to date that you want to include in those biographical sketches.

Know, too, that in the budget narrative you can also include information not necessarily about who the research assistants are going to be or other personnel, but what sorts of skills they would bring to the project.

Slide Forty-three:

The other section you don't want to leave out in the research narrative is the resources section. This is typically the last section of the 25 pages and it will include a general description, say, of what your institution or organization has in terms of things like library access and access to computers and access to places to store your data. Additional resources could include things like datasets, access to the longitudinal datasets that you would need for goal one. Clearly, teachers, classrooms, schools -- those are all resources that you need to have in place for most of the research that we fund.

You may also need access to a computer laboratory within the context of a school where students would come to complete the work, so all of that information should be included in your resource section.

Remember also to include in appendix A letters of agreement from schools or districts or teachers or the dataset administrator that you're going to need in order to do your research project.

Maybe I'll look at some questions here.

"Are there any budgetary limitations on subawards?" The answer is no, there aren't any budgetary limitations on sub-awards.

Slide Forty-four:

A critical resource is relationships with schools, so for any of you who are looking at research from the Institute of Education Sciences, it is clear, I hope, that we expect you to be working with schools, generally, and so you'll need to provide documentation that you in fact have relationships with schools that will allow you to collect the data that you intend to collect.

Slide Forty-five:

Additional reminders: Pay attention to what can and cannot be included in the appendices. So one of the important things to know is that if you put information in the appendix that is narrative in nature, in either appendix A or appendix B, and our compliance staff believes it belongs in the research narrative, they will simply remove that information and it will not go forward for review. So please make sure that what you include in the appendices fits within the category of allowable additions to the appendix. Okay, so just look at the RFA where it describes that.

Another very helpful thing is if you don't get to the program staff here at the Institute, or in addition to that, it is often extremely helpful to have a colleague who is not involved with the project and who maybe is an expert in a related but not the exact same area, to have them read the draft of the research narrative in particular. They can point out things that are not clear, places where they would like additional detail, and one of the things that I've learned is that's not always where you think it's going to be. So it's always helpful to have another pair of eyes looking at the draft before you submit it.

Slide Forty-six:

From the reviewer's point of view, they like to see proposals that are easy to read. So, write clearly and concisely. Make sure you address all the points that are described in the RFA. Again, the RFA is a wonderful resource and we have really tried in many ways to lay out a road map in terms of the kinds of information that should be included in your application.

Again, this goes to the "clearly and concisely" recommendation. Organize your information in a logical sequence. Try to make it coherent so that it follows logically. You don't want reviewers flipping back and forth between sections where they are trying to find pieces of information. So think about how you put the information together in your research narrative.

Please label your sections. So again, the reviewers are going to be asked to score each application on its significance, its research plan, its personnel, and its resources. If you label your sections in that way, then it assists the reviewers in finding those sections.

Again, please number your pages. Generally, it is really helpful if you number your research narrative pages from 1 to 25, and then for your appendices you can do A-1 up through A-15, and for appendix B, do B-1 to B-10 so that it is very clear where the information is and so they can talk to each other at the panel and they can refer to different sections in their review.

Slide Forty-seven:

And in case you missed this earlier, we require electronic submissions, so you need to go to the grants.gov portal, and you need to download the application package and it is there

that you submit the application. The other thing to be aware of is that the principal investigator is not the person who pushes the very final submit button. The person who pushes that button will be the authorized representative from your institution, and you should make sure that you get your application materials to that person far enough in advance that they can do everything they need to do in order to push that final button. So don't wait until the last minute.

I guess the other thing to know is that there are no extensions. The date and time listed on the RFA is the date and time by which the applications must be received. So for the next competition, applications must be received by 4:30 p.m., Washington, D.C. time, or Eastern Standard Time, on October 2 [2008]. So those are the dates.

Just remember, too, that the time stamp is the time stamp that grants.gov puts on your application. It's not the time that your computer says it is. It's the time that their computer says it is. So just don't wait until the last minute, because you don't want your proposal returned without review because it is a couple of minutes late.

Slide Forty-eight:

So, here's how you'll know that your online forms will be complete: you'll have PDFs of all the proposal contents that have been uploaded or all the application contents. The authorized representative has completed the final steps of the electronic process and you will receive an email acknowledging the receipt of your application.

Slide Forty-nine:

So, final reminders and then I'm going to look at your questions.

Slide Fifty:

Start early, read the RFA, in case you didn't get that earlier. Read the RFA. Talk with your program officer, and start the online submission process early. Please don't wait until the last day to try to get everything in.

Slide Fifty-one:

So some other little words of wisdom from my time here. Remember that you can't get funded if you don't submit an application. So, junior investigators often ask me: "Is it worth it, should I put in an application?" And I say absolutely, you should put in an application. If you don't get funded the first time (and it's more than likely you won't, because very few applications get funded the first time through), you will learn a tremendous amount. The reviewers typically provide very useful and productive feedback, which helps you put in a better proposal the next time. Revise and resubmit is the rule, not only for junior investigators but also for senior investigators, and persistence often pays off.

But I think the critical thing to remember is that if you don't put an application in, you can be assured that you will not get funded. So just remember.

Slide Fifty-two:

All right, so there is my contact information in case folks have questions that I don't get to at this time.

And now I know we only have officially a few more minutes, so I apologize for those of you who have to sign off. I will answer questions here for a little bit.

So I'm going to go in order here. So I have a question here that says, "Does IES or NCSER fund projects in which co-PIs are at different universities? If so, how does this typically work and/or what challenges might occur in this type of situation?"

Yes, we do fund projects where co-PIs are at different universities. I talked about the need for subaward budgets. That is typically what you would need, so you need to have an agreement with the primary institution and a subaward to the other institution. Generally, this means that your sponsor and project offices at both institutions need to be talking to each other. Do know that the Department of Education only makes awards to a single institution. So, one institution will be the primary recipient of the award and they will be responsible for managing any subawards to other institutions.

"Do you look more favorably at including an external evaluator in your proposal if your project includes an efficacy study?"

Generally, external evaluators are very important for scale-up projects because the intent there is to have real distance and separation between the developer and the evaluation. For efficacy studies, it's less important. Depending upon how much prior evidence already exists, if it's a replication study and there have already been several trials where the developers have been involved, maybe then you need to do something where you have an external evaluator, but it's not a requirement.

I mentioned the scope can be outside of K-12, including pre-K. What about a scope of work that looks at student engagement in high school compared to student engagement in higher education?

Actually, we have one postsecondary program and the focus of that program is really looking at postsecondary, things the school system or the college or community college could do to increase the likelihood of success for students in the postsecondary environment. So, if you are interested in looking at questions of engagement within that framework, it certainly is a possibility.

I have here: "Is it okay to include in the biosketch articles submitted or in preparation, or only published articles?"

I certainly think it's fine to include articles that are submitted in your biosketch. I think that articles in preparation can become tricky. I would certainly talk with your colleagues and other individuals on your team to get their sense about whether that's sensible or not. We as an institute don't have a rule about that.

"Do you need prior approval for access to restricted datasets for a goal one application, or can you state in an application that you will be applying for the datasets?"

I think that the strongest applications probably already have prior approval for access to the restricted dataset because you want to be able to demonstrate that you'll be ready to go. The other reason why this might be important is that in order for you to put together a good Goal One identification project, you are already going to need to be familiar with the dataset. So you're going to need to be able to have already been in and sort of playing around with the variables and understanding what variables you're going to need to construct and so generally, the strongest proposals will already have access to those data.

"Does IES have an annual meeting or conference like OSEP project directors' meeting?"

Yes, we do. All funded projects -- we meet typically in early June and everyone is required to include in their budgets travel to support attendance at the project meeting, the PI meeting.

"The Letter of Intent date was August 4. Can you still submit an application without a Letter of Intent?"

Yes, you can certainly submit an application without a Letter of Intent. If you are interested in applying for the October 2 deadline, you should send an e-mail or a brief synopsis to the program officer who is named for your topic. That will allow that conversation between the program officer and you to begin. So even though the Letter of Intent date has passed, do be in touch with your program officer.

Oh, regarding the Letter of Intent: the length requirement for the project description is 3500 characters -- about a page. "What about the length requirements for the other components of the Letter of Intent package?"

I don't believe there's anything else you're required to submit. So generally, a Letter of Intent is only a page and all the information that's requested should be within that single-page document.

I have a question here that says, "I work for a nonprofit that developed technology-based interventions, but we don't have an experienced research staff. What would be the best strategy for submitting a proposal to IES for either a development or an efficacy proposal?"

First of all, I would recommend that you talk with Edward Metz or Jonathan Levy who are our two program officers for the Ed. Technology Program and they can certainly talk with you. I know this is a question that they receive frequently. Generally, I would recommend that you would work on developing some partnerships where you would get someone with some experience involved in the project in either a consultant role, an advisory role, or maybe a shared project role where you have a co-PI. But talk with either Ed or Jonathan. They can work with you.

I have another question here: "If there is a program ongoing in a school district and the university is collaborating with the schools, is there a preferred submitter? That is, for a goal three grant, is the university or the school district a better source for the grant?"

The general rule of thumb is that the university is probably going to be the primary location of where the research itself is going to be done; that is where the data will be analyzed and so that is generally the institution that brings the research expertise. But that's really just a general guideline and it may vary. Again, please talk with your program officer about the best way to do that, or the best partnership.

All right, do we have any other questions? I know that we're after our time.

I have a question here that says, "Would it be risky in terms of getting funded if we proposed to study 0- to 3-year olds?" I think that it's not risky; it's just you have to make sure that you apply to the right topic, so you cannot propose to work with 0 to 3 years of age within the National Center for Education Research. So do not apply to any of the topic areas there.

However, under the special education programs, the National Center for Special Education programs, there are topics that do permit working with young learners who are at risk for developing a need for special education services.

Do you have any other questions? I'm looking here to see if I have any.

I have a question which says, "In a peer-led program, could we randomize applicants into treatment providers and comparison?" Possibly. Again, this kind of a question I really would recommend that you talk with the program officer who makes the most sense. So if you're looking at the social and behavioral program, for example, contact the program officer for that competition.

All right, if we don't have any other questions, I want to thank you all for -- whoops. I just got one that was just sent to me here.

"How often does IES fund behavioral studies in contrast to curriculum?"

You know, I'm actually not sure I know how to answer that question because I don't have the full context for it. Again, I use curriculum as an example throughout. But yes, would behavioral studies be isolated to the social behavioral program? Again, it depends upon what your outcome of interest is here. So I think the question is: Where do we look -- where do we fund research where the intent of the intervention is to change behavior, student behavior? Where do we apply?

Generally, you would see that under the social behavioral programs in either NCER or NCSEER. However, it is also possible that that could be considered under the Early Childhood Programs in either of those two competitions as well. There may be other places as well. But those are the ones that I would think would be the primary fits, right, across most of the other programs where student academic achievement is usually the primary outcome of interest.

All right, so I want to thank everyone. I know it's late in the day. I apologize if I was stumbling over my words there at the end. But please don't hesitate to either send me an e-mail or to send any of my staff or any of the staff within the National Center of Education Research any questions that you might have. We are here to help and it's our job to make sure that we get the best quality applications in that we can, so we'd love to hear from you.

So again, thanks for your attention and thanks for all the questions; that helps keep these webinars engaging. I hope that we'll have a chance to talk to you soon.

Thanks again.